

**1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives.**

This practice is titled "Character Education - It's Elementary". It is a Character Education program designed, developed and implemented by the faculty and staff of an elementary school grades K-3 as a four year building objective. The practice focuses on how specific character traits embody a person of character, introduces students to 12 different historically significant "people" of character education, explores individuals as heroes vs. super heroes and involves students in community service activities. This is the third year of the program. Beginning in 1998, the Apple Wisdom Curriculum (the apple was chosen as a symbol of healthy choices a student can make based on the wisdom that is learned in school) was developed by our School Based Planning Committee in order to address a need identified by the faculty and staff to teach our children the importance character education as a tool for enacting positive change both in social and academic behavior. The Apple Wisdom Curriculum included an in-depth study of 10 different character words, five words per year, over a two year period. In 1998-1999, the children studied Friendship, Cooperation, Compassion, Generosity and Acceptance. In 1999-2000, five more character words were added.

As the program continued successfully through the first two years, the committee revised and expanded the curriculum, setting higher standards to be accomplished by adding historically significant people and community service to the program. The new program is titled, "Apple Wisdom's Heroes" and a new curriculum resource guide has been written and distributed to the staff. It includes the study of the lives of 12 individuals, Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Anwar Sadat, Chief Wilma Mankiller, Mother Theresa, Raoul Wallenberg, Rosa Parks, Chai Ling, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Eleanor Rossevelt. It identifies their character traits and why these individuals are recognized for their contributions to society. The resource guide also includes the 5 service projects. The committee also adopted the Character Counts -Six Pillars of Character, Respect, Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Caring, Fairness and Citizenship as the focus for the character education in-depth study. The children now study the character traits, why the historical individuals are "heroes" and how they have positively affected the world around them. Through the student's involvement in the in-depth study and combined with the community service activities, children will be able to learn how they can incorporate attributes of heroism into their daily lives. They will also be able to learn how to positively impact the lives of others and become heroes in their own way.

The Apple Wisdom's Heroes Curriculum Resource Guide is divided into eight learning modules. The guides outline procedures, targeted character traits, book lists, lesson plans, evaluation criteria, strategies for a multi-sensory approach to learning, suggestions for integration into existing curriculum and recommendations for community involvement. Each character trait module consists of four phases. In Phase I, the student's prior knowledge is assessed both informally and formally. In Phase II, the students study the character trait being targeted and the two heroes associated with the trait. Teachers engage students in numerous motivational and cross curricular character trait activities. A total school approach is utilized as the students are immersed in Character Education. The students participate in numerous

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activities such as a guest appearance by Ronald McDonald as he performs his "On the Inside" Character Education Program. In some classes the daily morning opening exercises include an "Apple Wisdom Rap" which helps motivate and reinforce learned concepts. The PTA provides guest speakers and readers to each class, adding their own experiences to the curriculum. The Gifted and Talented department incorporates many of the character traits into their presentations to each class as do the specialists teachers of Art, Music and Physical Education. Each class receives a set of motivational posters purchased through the school budget to help promote the program. Classroom and hallway bulletin boards, a Parent-Home Connection Newsletter and information on the school web site help to keep families up to date and offer suggestions as to what can be done at home to reinforce the program. Phase III is the service component. The five projects chosen serve the school, the community and the environment. Phase IV involves assessing the understanding of the concepts presented through different evaluation methods.

### **Listed Measurable Objectives**

1. In 1998-1999, 75% of the students and in 1999-2000, 85% of the students will demonstrate improved scores on a locally developed Character Education writing sample when comparing their pre/post test scores on a designated character trait.
2. In 2000-2001, 75% of the students in grade 3 will demonstrate improved scores on a locally developed character education writing prompt when comparing their pre/post scores on a designated historical figure who can serve as role models due to their accomplishments and the positive choices they made when faced with challenges.
3. In 1998 - 2002 students will participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of classroom time engaged in cross curricular and motivational activities per character trait, every year of the four year program.

### **Innovation, Achievement**

This practice is innovative and promotes high student achievement. The innovation occurs with the celebration of the historically significant people and the community service components of character education. Apple Wisdom/Apple Wisdom Heroes elevates character education to a position of priority in the curriculum. This practice promotes high student achievement by encouraging critical and higher-order thinking. Students study a character trait, study the heroes associated with that trait, perform a service and evaluate how to incorporate that trait into their own lives, thus becoming a hero in their own way and continuing the cycle of giving back to the community.

**2. Describe the educational needs. List the Core Curriculum Content and/or Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).**

The practice was developed by surveying parents and staff to identify the educational needs of the students. At the center of the concerns was maximizing academic achievement for every student and reducing the number of behavioral problems. Our students needed a program which promoted high student achievement as well as social responsibility. Apple Wisdom / Apple Wisdom's Heroes was created to meet the educational and behavioral needs of our students.

The major areas of the Core Curriculum Content Standards addressed:

### **Workplace Readiness Standards**

1. All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills.
2. All students will use technology, information and other tools.
3. All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving skills.
4. All students will demonstrate self-management skills.

### **Language Arts Literacy**

- 3.1 All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences.
- 3.2 All students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information
- 3.3 All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

### **Social Studies**

- 6.1 All students will learn democratic citizenship.
- 6.2 All students will learn democratic citizenship through the humanities, by studying literature, art, history and philosophy and related fields.

### **Provide and example to substantiate the response.**

An example used to substantiate this response would be found by examining the Character Trait of Respect. In this module, the children begin with their in-depth study of the targeted behaviors of respect. "A respectful person lives by treating others the way they wanted to be treated, accepts others who are different, lives peacefully and shows courtesy to all." In a classroom, children with respect listen, keep unkind thoughts to themselves, speak kindly to teachers and other students, play fairly and wait their turn. Suggested readings include the stories I Hate English!, The Handmade Alphabet, The Story of Ferdinand and All the Colors of the Earth. The class discusses the Wizard of Oz and how the scarecrow wanted a brain and felt he could get respect from others if he has one. The class discusses respecting nature, older generations, people who are different and characters from Aesop's Fables. They build a Respect Quilt, design Peacemaker Awards, and learn the Golden Rules. In the next phase, the children meet the two Heroes of Respect, Mahatma Gandhi and Cesare Chavez and study the lives of each one. They examine how these two people incorporated respect into their daily lives and contributed to the betterment of the world. Finally, after participating in the community service project, the children examine how they can also incorporate respect into their own lives using the two heroes as examples to follow, and begin the process of living as a respectful person.

### **3. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school.**

This practice is easily replicated. We used many of the mechanisms already in place within our school system to establish the program. The committee consists of five people sharing a common goal- to bring an exciting program into our school. Many schools have a School Based Planning Team or some type of committee that establishes building objectives, or more informally great ideas to try out. Once the committee is established, a needs survey is a good place to start. By surveying the staff, parents and administration, a partnership is formed. The survey found a definite need for a system of improving academics and behavior both in school and at home. Research led the committee to the idea of Character Education. Curriculum writing is completed during the summers. We submitted the program in the form of a curriculum resource guide to the staff and they voted to make it a building objective for two years.

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By the end of the two years, we evaluated our goals, realized the program was successful and the staff voted to continue for another two years. The committee wanted to expand and add new components, so next we developed the expanded program. The PTA and school administration were part of the partnership and supplied the committee with minimal funds and much needed people power.

### **4.Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.**

The committee established the following varieties of assessment strategies in order to determine the extent to which the objectives of this practice were met. Since this was an ongoing , four year-long project, our first strategy relies on teacher, parent and student interviews throughout the year. As informal as this may seem, it is a technique that has been quite insightful. Reports of successful experiences and enjoyment of suggested stories and activities are constantly given to the committee members. The second strategy involves a pre/post test writing sample. This does represent a more traditional type of assessment, but includes the use of the open-ended questions. This strategy helps us to holistically examine the children's work as it relates to their individual levels of understanding. The third assessment is the in the form of long term projects. Many of the projects are displayed throughout the year in classroom learning centers or as part of motivational bulletin boards. The fourth assessment strategy is the Apple Wisdom Activity Log sent to the committee by each class summarizing their activities for each trait. The monthly logs allow the committee to assess time spent on each character trait, as well as monitor or modify different activities per trait.

### **Data showing how the practice met the needs.**

The first objective(1998-1999) was to have 75% of the students in third grade demonstrate improved scores on a locally developed Character Development writing sample. When we compiled the scores, the result was that 86% of the third grade students demonstrated the improved scores.

The second objective(1999-2000) was to have 85% of the students in third grade demonstrate improved scores on a locally developed Character Development writing sample. When we compiled the scores, the result was that 93% of the third grade students demonstrated the improved scores.

The third objective (1998-2000) was to have 60 minutes of classroom time devoted to instruction and activities per character trait. The time devoted to instruction and activities in the third grade classes far exceeded the required 60 minutes per character trait. The total time devoted over the two years averaged 3,843 minutes teaching and facilitating the program. On the average this meant that teachers and students spent over 200 minutes per trait vs.the recommended 60 minutes.

Perhaps the most compelling assessment of the practice are the students' reactions and comments, "I thought we were going to learn about apples, but instead we learned about us." We have created a practice that goes far beyond the basics by developing an environment devoted to active learning for all students. We want our students to enjoy and appreciate the value of building strong character, while giving them the tools they will need to become the future heroes of tomorrow.